

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A method of providing a client-side local assistant system from
5 an agent's computer system to a customer's computer system, the method
comprising:
 providing an agent Web site that presents a local assistant download
offer for viewing on the customer's computer system;
 in response to selection by the customer's computer of a download link
10 for the local assistant download offer, invoking a server-side local assistant
administrative system installed on the agent's computer system such that the
local assistant administrative system transmits a local assistant installation
agreement to the customer's computer system;
 in response to receipt by the agent's computer system of an accepted
15 local assistant installation agreement from the customer's computer system,
installing a client-side core local assistant system on the customer's computer
system; and
 in response to receipt by the agent's computer system of a request from
the customer's computer system for a predefined ruleset and information
20 database associated with the core local assistant system, installing the
predefined ruleset and information database on the customer's computer system.
2. A method as in claim 1, and wherein core local assistant system
includes functionality that allows the customer's computer system to observe,
25 analyze, and/or store information regarding a computer-mediated customer
interaction.
3. A method as in claim 2, and wherein the computer-mediated
customer interaction comprises viewing a web page.

4. A method as in claim 2, and wherein the computer-mediated customer interaction comprises playing music.

5. A method as in claim 1, and wherein the core local assistant system includes functionality that allows the customer's computer system to define periodic tasks to be performed by the customer's computer system.

6. A method as in claim 5, and wherein the periodic tasks include gathering, analyzing and/or displaying information regarding predefined topics of interest.

7. A method as in claim 1, and wherein the core local assistant system includes functionality that allows direct interaction between the core local assistant system and the customer.

8. A computer-based system, installed on an agent's computer system, that provides for presentation of selection information on a customer's computer system, the computer-based system comprising:
A client-side core local assistant system that, upon request by a customer, is downloadable from the agent's computer system to the customer's computer system; and

a server-side local assistant administrative system that, subsequent to download of the core local assistant system to the customer's computer system, provides for access by the customer's computer system to at least one predefined ruleset and an associated information database relating to the selected information.

9. a computer-based system as in claim 8, and wherein the predefined ruleset and associate information database is downloadable from the agent's computer system to the customer's computer system.

10. A computer-based system as in claim 9, and wherein the local assistant administrative system includes a merchant database that stores information relating to assisted merchants.

5 11. A computer-based system as in claim 10, and wherein, subsequent to download of the predefined ruleset and associated information database to the customer's computer system, selected portions of the merchant database are downloadable to the customer's computer system in accordance with rules included in the predefined ruleset.

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12. A computer-based system as in claim 8 and wherein the core local assistant system includes functionality for specifying and/or interpreting rulesets for observing, analyzing and/or storing information regarding computer-mediated customer interactions.

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13. A computer-based system as in claim 8, and wherein the core local assistant system includes functionality for defining periodic tasks to be performed by the customer's computer system.

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14. A computer-based system as in claim 8, and wherein the core local assistant system includes functionality for direct interaction between the core local assistant system and the local assistant administrative system.

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15. A computer-based system as in claim 8, and wherein the core local assistant system includes a rules interpreter system that retrieves and analyzes web documents related to the selected information.

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16. A computer-based system as in claim 8, and wherein the core local assistant system includes a rules interpreter system that creates and displays interactive windows related to the selected information.

17. A computer-based system as in claim 8, and wherein the core local assistant system includes a rules interpreter system that reads and writes local interaction data related to the selected information for storage on the customer's computer system.

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18. A computer-based system as in claim 8, and wherein the core local assistant system includes a rules interpreter system that transmits requests to the local assistant administrative system for ruleset updates.

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19. A computer-based system as in claim 8, and wherein the core local assistant system includes a rules interpreter system that transmits requests to update interaction data relating to the selected information and stored in the local assistant administrative system.

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20. A computer-based system as in claim 8, and wherein the core local assistant system includes a rules interpreter system that allows the customer's computer system to interact directly with the core local assistant system via browser navigation to a local reserved URL.

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21. A computer-based system as in claim 20, and wherein the rules interpreter system includes functionality for parsing the local reserved URL to determine requested action and data to be determined by the customer's computer system.